

FORUM

ANTHROPOLOGISTS' APPROACH THE NEW CAPITALISM

CLASS, LABOUR, SOCIAL REPRODUCTION: TOWARDS A NON-SELF LIMITING ANTHROPOLOGY

• DON KALB •

Is there any serious dispute these days that we are living through the most jumbo laying out of capitalist social relations across the globe that humanity has ever experienced? The globalization of the capitalist value regime might not yet be complete, nor function fully synchronized in real time, but it is certainly more encompassing than it has ever been. For a while the (Western) social sciences thought that they could account for this process in terms of 'modernity at large' or cultural globalization theory. Increasingly, though, the capitalist nature of it all, left unspecified in such visions, has pushed itself to the foreground. Even the scholars of assemblages, governmentalities, or ontology, now sometimes admit that these were capital-driven assemblages, governmentalities, and ontologies after all. That capitalist nature is not just about the aggravating turbulence of boom and bust and about the increasing financialization and securitization of the process, though these are certainly very substantial and increasingly paramount properties, taking whole societies and classes hostage to bumpy rides and exposing them to serious risks. It is also about the systematic spatial unevenness of it all, the profound social and cultural polarizations, the aggravating inequalities, the exploitation and extraction, dispossessions and enclosures; the political crises, the cracking legitimacy of the state, the elevation of the nation as an imaginary protective shield; the violence, the people on the move—and ultimately also about their drowning in the Mediterranean by the thousands as an enforced sacrifice for the scares and uncertainties of the Western middle classes unpleasantly confronted by the change of the global scenery. The intellectual history of the last quarter century can be read as the unwilling rediscovery of capitalism and its logics.

Just consider how recently we were seriously discussing 'post-materialism' and 'post-industrialism', indeed the '*adieu au proletariat*'. The death of class was proclaimed in numerous quarters. The 'society of individuals' was celebrated and was seen as driven by consumption choices and the play of cultural significations cum identities. So was the apparent world historical victory of 'democratic market societies' over their twentieth-century rival utopias, and the thus implied political calm and popular consent to technocratic governance. There was also the well-selling dream of a 'new economy' of endless productivity growth in play-driven 'creative cities'. Against the old 'society of labour' the new 'knowledge society' was warmly welcomed, in particular by the governing classes, who shared abundantly in the capitalist bonanza.

In retrospect one can only be shocked at the parochialism of Western academia: what seemed so paramount from within Western middle-class locations appeared like crass nonsense from a global point of view: the industrial proletariat employed and exploited

within the global factory grew by three or four times in a few decades; ‘relative surplus’ populations engaged in ‘hunting and gathering’ for work, as Jan Breman noted (2008), were created with a speed and magnitude not seen before. De-peasantification was now a world phenomenon. Urbanization was accelerating; for the first time in history the majority of humanity was living urban lives. But urban landscapes, old and new, were now more unequal, more gentrified as well as more slummified, than any city-scape of the 1970s had been. No surprise that the world was also warming fast.

Analytically speaking, the ‘return of capitalism’ meant at least four key things: 1) populations, organizations, and objects everywhere were increasingly going to be judged or ‘valued’ according to the capitalist value regime and the way they would adapt to its stepped-up and swiftly-shifting demands; 2) local/global property relationships, and their entanglement with the state, its legal and financial apparatus, and its management of populations and ‘moralities’, were going to be the key drivers of history; 3) a growing proportion of such property relationships was going to appear as financialized claims expressed in the accounting of credit and debt; 4) and as a consequence of all this, inequality would be systematically on the increase, thinning out the national ‘middle classes’ that had been seen as crucial for the very legitimacy of capitalism in the first place—at least in the old cores—and producing precariates, multitudes, debt-peons, wage slaves, and ‘wage hunter gatherers’ in large numbers, as states bent to the demands of the millionaires and billionaires and the cadres running their affairs.

While the last thirty years have seen an almost complete intellectual silence on the subject of ‘the working class’, no one these days denies the reality of the business class or the financial class (see Kalb 2015). And indeed, as Warren Buffet himself has acknowledged, it is this class (‘my class’, as Buffet confided) that is politically winning. Which is not to say that their life is necessarily leisurely. While many no doubt enjoy their pleasures, life for the capitalist class as such has become increasingly uncertain, not unlike that of anyone else. A capitalism unbound means that its contradictions too will be unbound: that is, up to the point of uncontrolled global warming, ‘global war-making’, worldwide urban rebellion, declining governance capacities and state legitimacy (‘trust’ as they say), and the increasing likelihood of ‘secular stagnation’ within ‘the economy’. Indeed, assembled in congregations like the World Economic Forum in Davos, the policy section of the haute bourgeoisie seems closer these days to a point suggested by Georgy Lukacs sometime in the 1930s than for a long while: if it could see itself objectively it would have to commit suicide.

The much belated intellectual realization of all this is reflected in the current phenomenon of blockbuster sales of very scholarly books about inequality. Thomas Piketty sold more than a million copies of his tome of more than 600 pages, *Capital in the 21st Century* (2014), which few people seem able to read from beginning to end (as is documented). With his utopian-republican attack on inequality he was chosen for the Financial Times ‘Business Book of the Year’ prize, sponsored by McKinsey, the global consultants, and was invited to the White House. David Graeber (2011) has not enjoyed those privileges though he has received his share of honourable invitations as well. He sold more than 120,000 copies (25 translations not counted) of an almost equally thick and learned book about *Debt: the first 5000 years*, sending a much more incendiary political message out into the world than Piketty, as one might expect of an anarchist

anthropologist. These are unprecedented numbers that are a testimony to unprecedented times and newly awoken political concerns among the reading public.

How is anthropology doing in the midst of this unexpected all-round turbulence? The picture is predictably divided. At the American Anthropological Association meetings and to some extent at the European Association of Social Anthropologists, there seems to be a competition going on for the largest number of session attendants between, on the one hand, a new radical political economy concerned with the new configurations of capitalism, including the popular contestations surrounding it, and, on the other, a new synchronic cultural essentialism associated with 'ontology' which is claiming to do what anthropologists purportedly ought to be doing, that is, assessing cultural difference. This looks like a new Left-Right split along intellectual lines not entirely incomparable to the lines of division within the discipline in the 1970s (though 'ontology' must certainly be deemed to be more Culturalist with a capital C than anything that emerged around 'thick description' in the 1970s). There is also a revitalized economic anthropology working on the increasingly blurred terrain between Polanyi, Mauss, Marx, Kropotkin and other heterodox and embedded economic thinkers. And of course there is an ongoing interest in the policy fields, governmentalities, and social outcomes of neoliberalism. Here, if I am not mistaken, Foucault is increasingly wedded to Marx, in an effort to recognize the globalizing capitalist environment that drives and animates these policy fields annexed to governmentalities. Ongoing concerns about citizenship, too, are ever more connected to issues of security, sovereignty and migration. Thus, a good chunk of anthropology seems to be dealing increasingly, in one way or another, with the big elephants in the room.

But here is the catch: what one might call anthropology's ingrained 'primitivist reflexes' seem to be reducing the potential fruits of that engagement (see Kalb & Neveling 2014). The 'primitivist reflex' sums up anthropology's recurrent search for the 'pristine', for the untainted, for the signs of ongoing non-capitalist aspiration or belief even in late modern times. As I will point out, this is one of the sources for the self-limiting anthropology that I am arguing against.

One of the most generative qualities of anthropology as an academic field has been its lack of agreement on its characteristic units of analysis. The field-work 'revolution' of the twentieth century has produced a methodological proclivity for small scale and face-to-face settings in the discipline, true. But various movements within anthropology have made a point of situating such micro sites in large-scale and long-run processes to thus allow an intimate view of the big elephants in the room. In fact this world-historical impulse is an even older tradition in anthropology than fieldwork (see Kalb 2015). Anthropologists of the world historical bent would argue that by doing intimately situated extended case studies, we can make new discoveries about the nature and dynamics of such large processes, as well as discoveries about their alignments with local histories. And indeed, anthropologists increasingly seem to be making claims about whole world regions, or whole world predicaments. The globalization of capital and of capitalist society makes this more urgent as well as more valid than ever.

The primitivist reflex, however, tends to ignore such methodological dialectics. It maintains that it is our foremost task to discover and describe the emic 'knowledges', 'moralities' and life ways of the populations with which we work. While these days it certainly acknowledges that few people live beyond the reach of capitalist states and

markets, it does assume that people outside production and market exchange—that is in their kinship networks, neighbourhoods, communities, sodalities, so called ‘free spaces’—are inclined to embrace non-capitalist values and even sustain a genuine ‘everyday communism’ and its associated anti-capitalist reciprocity. This assumes that such private and common spaces are not infected by the social relationships and histories of capitalism, that they thrive in an ontological (indeed) separation from it. In the work of Graeber, for example—notwithstanding the grand sweep of his ‘*Debt*’ book—it is then assumed that it is from these capitalism-free spaces of everyday communism that a new morality and a new commons can emerge that is authentic and antithetic to the spirit of capitalism. Indeed, for Graeber this is the very source of anti-capitalist possibilities (Graeber 2011, 2013; Kalb 2014).

Some of this is literally what the new *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* promotes. Similar figures of thought come back in the thinking about capitalism derived from Gibson-Graham and other feminist thinkers in heterodox economics, such as those featured in the *Cultural Anthropology blog* section on capitalism: for example (Bear et al. 2015, cf. Kalb & Neveling 2014). Primitivist anthropologists assume that capitalism is ‘just’ an economy, and a large scale one at that, but not a ‘whole’ society. In that sense they are not at all different from neoclassical economists. They are only dealing with the opposite piece of the liberally differentiated pie called society: they supposedly do culture while the economists do the market. Primitivists are concerned that this large-scale market economy preys on the human communities, sucks labour and value from them and tries to infect them, on behalf of its own legitimacy, with its mean egoistic market spirit. Primitivists, while rescuing the pristine, therefore tend to fight the spirits of the market first of all (or of imposing bureaucracies, who do the same, see Graeber’s latest book, 2014).

However, they seldom show much patience for the long and complex histories of whole communities as they became inserted over time in world capitalism and began to mould themselves to its conditions. Such communities did so because their very social reproduction came to depend on their capacity to do so. This is not at all to say that they became ‘homogenized’, as Eric Wolf, Peter Worsley and many others in anthropology have so magisterially shown. Capitalism may be a totality but it is not of one piece: it is as highly-structured, socially and spatially differentiated, globally uneven, and locally embedded, as actual human habitats and life-worlds are (Kalb 2015). Saying that human habitats have for a long time largely or fully reproduced themselves within capitalist dynamics is also not at all to suggest that such communities are ‘reducible to capitalism’, whatever that means. But it does imply that actual life-worlds develop within and against the pressures and limits set by such capitalist relations.

Primitivists abhor the idea that capitalism might be imposing homogeneity over and within such communities. But that idea itself is a categorical mistake similar to the idea of capitalism as a mere ‘economy’. There is a fundamental misunderstanding going on here: homogeneity would be the death of capital. Globalizing capital continually produces differentiation and unevenness, and indeed antagonistic cleavages of many kinds. And it does so in ways that are always deeply situated and historical, but never just ‘authentic’ to people or places. Cultural difference is really the opposite of an anti-thesis to capital.

The voice of the anthropological primitivists is in a sense the equivalent of the moral outcry for autonomy and authenticity emanating from the horizontalist worldwide urban

mobilizations. And indeed it has been closely interwoven with these recently—see the rhetoric of both Graeber and *HAAU*. I can imagine Zizek's wry reply to the anthropological primitivists: 'there is no outside'.

The way forward for an anthropology that wants to learn about the emergent relations of a globalizing capitalism is to proudly reclaim what has been vacated in the last thirty years: the key notions of labour, class and social reproduction. However, we need to do so in a way that will allow us to empty them of old garbage and let them fill up with updated content. This is a conceptual issue first. Labour then, is not just 'the Fordist blue collar worker'. Nor is it just production in a site designated as a production site. It refers to all those human acts necessary to produce life, to reproduce life, independent of the exact relationships such labour maintains with the networks of capital and the ways in which capital gleans surplus value from it. This of course includes wage labour—for a society of property-less people still the predominant way of earning a living.

Kasimir and Carbonella's recent book (2014) is a great example of such proud reclaiming of the labour concept in anthropology. Class, too, needs to be rethought, as James Carrier and I have argued recently (2015). Class refers to all sorts of mechanisms of systematic appropriation and extraction within the social relationships that men and women need to enter as they try to reproduce their lives over time—again, wage labour being an important example, with credit and debt relationships gaining in importance worldwide. This may include relationships of kinship, housing, of care, of education, of health, of citizenship. Indebted neoliberal states turn all such fields into domains for the management of capitalist productivity and, indeed, ultimately for debt collection. Ever since Foucault's lectures on neoliberalism have become popular this has been called bio-politics. But, as Foucault knew, this is nothing new in the history of capitalism. In modern times, since the 16th century, 'the family' and 'the poor' have always been managed with an eye on productivity, as has education, the credit system etc.

As is clear from these short notes on labour and class, social reproduction may ultimately be the key umbrella concept around which a critical anthropology could organize, one that not only tries to discover and reveal the ever-shifting capitalist realities, but that also seeks to inform the counter-politics of the popular. Labour, class and social reproduction train our view in discovering how the intimate worlds of the everyday are, against the primitivists, necessarily embedded and structured, in identifiable ways—though not predetermined, logically derivable, or 'reducible'—within the social networks that capitalism spins and from which it extracts and appropriates the surplus value that keeps it alive. Capitalism is not primarily about spirits or ghosts, after all: it is about ineluctable social relationships and power configurations of class; about practices and forms of labour, including when they take the 'inspired' form of finance, or of 'creative cities' or of 'knowledge societies' or of 'the middle classes', and so on. This is so, independently of the fact that some people at some moments may well try to escape these forms and relationships—as the anthropological primitivists imagine themselves, and everyone else, trying to do—even as others dwelling in a quasi-outside will try to enter them.

In the early 2000s Charles Tilly (2001a, 2001b) noted with dismay in *Anthropological Theory* that anthropologists after Eric Wolf were surprisingly reluctant to talk about systematic social inequalities. He also pointed to my '*Expanding Class*' book (1997), among others, as a counter-example. Not surprisingly, such an unfashionable book was

not widely read in those heydays of neoliberalism and ‘modernity at large’. Yet, in one of the larger sessions on capitalism at last year’s AAA in Washington DC, several people emphasized that we needed an ‘expanded notion of class’. I could not help but smile: I, and some others with me, seemed to be having ‘a good crisis’. Not as good as David Graeber, but still. Now is the time to creatively reappropriate such once-vacated notions and deploy them in expansive ways for a non-self limiting anthropology. This must be an anthropology that seeks to discover, understand, and explain local/global social, political and cultural predicaments in ways that might expand our ability to act upon them.

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DON KALB
 PROFESSOR
 DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
 CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY
 &
 CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
 UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

kalbd@ceu.edu

THOUGHTS ON WORLD-HISTORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE NEW CULTURALISM

• SHARRYN KASMIR •

Don Kalb writes that after decades of burying our collective heads in the sand, anthropologists are turning to the study of capitalism. He welcomes this development but sees a familiar, divided disciplinary landscape. On one side is a world-historical approach concerned with the ‘new configurations of capitalism, including the popular contestations around it’. This version of anthropology has its foundation in the political economy of Eric Wolf, Peter Worsley, and, more recently, David Harvey. On the other side, David Graeber, J.K. Gibson-Graham, and the journal *HAU* summon anthropologists to the urgent ethnographic task of documenting ‘everyday communism’, ‘non-capitalism’ or ‘alterity’.

Kalb’s has been a strong voice calling for a world-historical anthropology that uses extended case studies to ‘make new discoveries about the nature and dynamics’ of large-scale, long-term processes, ‘as well as discoveries about their alignments with local histories’. He considers that class, labour, and social reproduction are the principal avenues for tracing connections between the on-the-ground, intimate facts of everyday lives, and the processes of global capital accumulation, including financialization, the politics of state formation and the power wielding of multinational organizations. The alternative ‘horizontalist’ search for ontological difference is synchronic cultural essentialism, he contends. It rehearses the primitivist reflexes that have rendered anthropology inadequate to the challenge of theorizing the current political and economic crisis. Kalb aims for big theory over the quest for ethnographic difference, thick description, or the ‘weak theory’ that J.K. Gibson-Graham (2014) proposes.

My comments are meant to develop Kalb’s critique by reference to some debates within the history of U.S. anthropology in which the issue of labour played a decisive role. As August Carbonella and I have advanced, ‘labour’ is a political concept that points to the power-laden processes of categorizing, differentiating, or unifying the manifold ways of working or seeking livelihood. Prior to the making of class (whether in- or for-itself), this involves engagements with capital and state, as well as relationships with other workers locally, regionally and globally. Construed in this way, labour necessarily implies the making of difference and similarity (Carbonella & Kasmir 2014; Kasmir & Carbonella 2008.)

First, I take a detour via a forum in *Dialectical Anthropology* on Kevin B. Anderson’s *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity and Non-Western Societies* (2015). Anderson uses the ethnographic notebooks (1879–1882) to introduce Marx as a global theorist. Access to the notebooks has been greatly expanded by new efforts at transcription and translation, and they indicate that far from discounting non-Western histories, Marx considered them closely. Marx’s writing on India, Ireland, Poland, and the U.S. (specifically on slavery and the Civil War) should dispel stale arguments that he was a strictly unilinear thinker. In his own day, Marx saw extant examples of the communal mode of production, notably the Indian village and the Russian peasant household.

While capitalism is too often and wrongly depicted as homogenizing and totalizing, Marx recognized its unevenness and heterogeneity, including islands of communalism in a capitalist sea (Ahmad 2015; Anderson 2015; Mathur 2015).

Marx saw the social structures and traditions of communal property as a source of resistance to capitalism, likely to make people more responsive to 'modern communist ideas'. That is why, he argued, colonial forces were so eager to wipe them out (Ahmad 2015: 202). Modernist metanarrative aside, this recollection would seem solid ground for the new culturalist project of finding contemporary examples of communalism in utopian communities, cooperatives, reciprocal exchange, non-commodified social relations, ontologies that prize non-maximizing values and so forth. However, we are cautioned against this conclusion; as Marx well knew, the Indian village was rooted in the brutal inequality of caste and its hierarchical division of labour, and some Russian peasant households relied upon wage labour.

Looking at these village relationships through the lens of labour, they appeared decidedly less egalitarian and more exploitative. Nonetheless, Marx enjoined activists and theoreticians of his day to view communal forms, in particular in Russia, as a basis for a future socialism, needing transformation to be sure, but with historical possibility. Key to their political agency was to link the defence of communal lifeways with the struggles of the industrial proletariat. Communal relations themselves did not lead to socialism, but they could be part of a political program built upon alliances that could bring it forth at a national scale (Ahmad 2015; Anderson 2015). This conclusion mirrors Marx's assessment of the cooperative societies promoted by his 19th-century anarchist contemporaries. He saw in co-ops some potential for nurturing socialist relations; however, insofar as they sidestepped confrontations with the capitalist class and the state, they risked political irrelevance.

A guided foray into Marx's ethnographic notebooks can help us better appreciate the new political-economy/culturalist split in anthropology, which turns in good measure on differing interpretations of communalism and non-commodified social relationships. U.S. anthropology has a long history of writing about the communal mode. Since Lewis Henry Morgan, anthropologists have had a lot to say about communal property, and they have initiated heated debates on whether or not the social relations and cultural expressions ethnographers encountered in the field were, in fact, egalitarian or were instead transformed by state formation, colonialism and capitalism.

Revisiting Franz Boas' depiction of the Northwest Coast Indians quickly makes the point. At the professional founding moment of U.S. anthropology, Boas ignored the struggles of indigenous cannery, sawmill, and longshore workers for decent wages and unions while he conducted his fieldwork among the Kwakiutl in the early 1900s. Rather than confront proletarianization and labour politics, Boas invented 'salvage ethnography' to capture the 'authentic' cultures of the native peoples. Questions of global labour processes and their alignments with local and regional histories have always been critical for understanding the people whom anthropologists study, but they have too often been obscured by a search for cultural difference (Carbonella & Kashmir 2014; Kashmir 2009).

These were the terms of the impassioned discussions in the late-1980s to early-1990s about the historical origins of foraging and egalitarianism among diverse San groups in the Kalahari. But neither a critique of Boas' culturalist imprint on U.S. anthropology

nor a review of the San debate should be taken to mean that all ethnographic cases of traditional egalitarian social relations should be held suspect. (Indeed, anthropology has its share of spurious portrayals of violent, patriarchal, competitive foragers.) Rather, they always need to be situated in a wider spatial and temporal field.

This was the broader perspective of Eleanor Leacock's ethno-historical and ethnographic research on the Montagnais-Naskapi in Labrador, collected in her *Myths of Male Dominance* (1981). Through fieldwork beginning in the 1950s and critical rereading of historical documents, Leacock recovered the existence of communal property and gender and social egalitarianism before European contact. She detailed the impact of colonial capitalism on indigenous societies, and she showed how the commoditization of furs, market relations and Jesuit missionaries transformed kinship, the sexual division of labour, authority patterns and gender and property relations. At first glance, it might seem that Leacock conceptualized capitalism as totalizing or as destroying all difference, or, to the contrary, that her research was an exemplar to be cited in support of present-day efforts to find non-capitalism. Though she joined the Marxist search for 'primitive communism' and would have welcomed the philosophical refusal to see capitalist ethos and subjectivity, male dominance and inequality everywhere, Leacock's ethno-historical critique was more precise than either of these two framings allow.

Leacock showed that social relations *in situ* and large-scale, long-run processes were fully intertwined. Key to understanding these connections was a focus on labour, class and social reproduction. For the Montagnais-Naskapi, this involved the emergence of a more rigid sexual division of labour, male dominance, centralized authority, privatized hunting territories, as well as inconsistencies in and resistance to these changes. These particular social transformations were not an inevitable response to the homogenizing impulse of colonial capitalism, but they were nonetheless historical facts. The distinction is worth underscoring: communalism might have obtained in social memories and structures of solidarity, but it would have done so in historically specific ways in relation to global configurations of labour and capital accumulation. Kalb imagines that Zizek would exclaim 'there is no outside' in response to today's anthropological primitivists. This interjection does not deny the existence of non-commodified relationships, reciprocity or cooperation but it does compel dialectical and historical thinking at multiple scales, and with labour at the fore.

June Nash, Jorge Dandler and Nicholas Hopkins' volume *Popular Participation in Social Change: Cooperatives, Collectives and Nationalized Industry* (1976) is instructive. As the title suggests, the collection positions worker cooperatives and rural collectives in relationship to nationalized industries. Contemplating the anti-colonial third world of the day, the editors took for granted that to study cooperative or collective forms required asking questions about labour, the world capitalist system and the state. Some of the chapters report that the co-ops under examination mimicked the relations of capital and created new inequalities or exacerbated previously existing ones, especially along lines of gender. In other cases, co-op members joined with other organized segments of the population in nationalist anti-colonial projects to control the commanding heights of the economy and to remake social relations at local and national levels.

Although Marx's judgment about the necessary connection of communalism to the struggles of the 'industrial proletariat' must be immediately re-conceptualized to chart

the fragmentation and heterogeneity of social relations in the wake of capitalist crisis and financialization, and although it has been a long time since third-world anti-colonial movements were ascendant, the issue of political alliance across space and difference remains decisive. August Carbonella and I maintain that anthropologists have a unique vantage point for drawing new ‘class maps’ that account for the massive, worldwide transformations of working populations and their manifold relationships and alignments over the last four decades (Carbonella & Kasmir 2014; Kasmir & Carbonella 2008.) Kalb has it right: anthropologists should document cooperative, communal and reciprocal practices and subjectivities. At the same time, we need to situate these within larger processes and consider their political impact in a broader field that includes relationships with distinct labourers across spatial scales.

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SHARRYN KASMIR
 PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY
 HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY
 Sharryn.M.Kasmir@hofstra.edu

CLASS VS. PRIMITIVISM?

RESPONSE TO DON KALB'S 'CLASS, LABOR, SOCIAL REPRODUCTION'

• MATTI ERÄSAARI •

Is there any serious dispute these days that we are living through the most jumbo laying out of capitalist social relations across the globe that humanity has ever experienced?

No, I don't think there is.

I also wholly agree with Don Kalb in that the political economist's toolkit seems to be very well suited for taking on this issue. With a growing body of literature attesting to the existence of recognisable middle classes all the way to the South Seas (Barbara, Cox & Leach 2015), it seems like even those who, like me, have been hesitant to pick up the concept because of the heavy background reading it comes with, can no longer get away with avoiding it. The striking popularity of a 2013 AAA panel that sought to foreground class and capitalist accumulation ('Anthropology's public engagement with capitalism: Beyond gifts versus markets') organised by Kalb together with Patrick Neveling also attests to the growing popularity of the approach: the allocated room not only ran out of seats but of floor space to sit on as well.

The concept of 'labour, likewise, seems to have much more to offer than is currently appreciated. I am only beginning to grasp this myself, having but recently started work on a new research project on time and value. What seems crucial for my research are situations where people want to sell their labour but are unable to do so, and hence look for other ways to convert their abundant time resources into something of value. Similar work carried out elsewhere (see for example Masquelier 2013; Jeffrey 2010; Ralph 2009) highlights the ways in which these labour reserves are connected with class aspirations and precarity.

Kalb's reminder that we should avoid needlessly tying the concept of labour down to Fordism or even designated work places, and rather use the concept in an inclusive sense capable of accommodating the full human capacity for labour, is thus a motion I happily second. As I see it, the specific usage of cumbersome terminological modifiers like 'socially necessary labour time', 'productive labour', 'alienated labour', and so on, are all indicators of the fact that 'labour' ought to be viewed as a broad concept, one that we divide into various analytical sub-categories precisely to illustrate what a strange arrangement it is that leaves people selling their labour and trying to estimate the value of that labour in units of time, money, or other commensurate media (not to mention the people who are left only wishing they had the opportunity to enter into these exchanges). If it is the case that labour has been conceptually restricted to mean alienated production-line labour only, I agree with Kalb that the concept ought to be seen in broader terms that lack this bias.

Where I part ways with Kalb, however, is in the way he wants to define the extent of these tools: instead of a 'non-self limiting anthropology', his call may risk defining the limits of anthropology elsewhere rather than extending its scope. Kalb's polemic is based

on two main moves: the first is a call to reclaim the concept of class and to make it central for understanding the world we live in. The second is a move to redefine 'class' more broadly. This, however, leads him to downplay 'primitivist' research which, in his view, fails to address the extended notion of 'class' he calls for.

Class: expanding and purging the concept

In order to empty the notions of class and labour of 'old garbage' and to 'let them fill up with up-dated content', Kalb calls for redefinition of these key concepts. As stated above, I have no problem with the all-encompassing usage of 'labour'. The redefinition of 'class', however, is somewhat more problematic. In Kalb's definition, an updated version of class refers to

all sorts of mechanisms of systematic appropriation and extraction within the social relationships that men and women need to enter into as they try to reproduce their lives over time—again, wage labour being an important such relationship, but credit and debt relationships gaining in importance worldwide. This may include relationships of kinship, housing, of care, of education, of health, of citizenship. (Kalb, p. 54 in this issue)

I have some difficulties grasping the full extent of this notion of class. If I have understood Kalb correctly, he looks to redefine class in terms of the exploitation present in human societies all the way to relations of kinship and care: all the systematic ways in which even public policy is now funnelled through the logic of profit making and debt collecting. Does 'class' then come to mean institutionalised socioeconomic inequalities? The reconceptualization appears to prioritize the analyst's or statistician's view over the self-definitional: hard facts over subjective views.

This definition does not, as such, do away with 'subjective' class: it simply makes socioeconomic factors decisive. Where there is a mismatch between self-identifications and socioeconomic indicators (see e.g. Barbara, Cox & Leach 2015: 7), it seems one has to make a choice. Kalb's choice is to say that we need to recognise class in the reproduction of inequality rather than recognise inequality in the reproduction of class. He may well be right. Today's social and economic inequalities hardly follow the logic of 19th-century production anymore; consequently they are also unlikely to produce the large-scale class-consciousness that the notion of self-identification brings to mind.

But look at the way Kalb uses the word 'class' in reference to groups of people: first we have the drowning masses in the Mediterranean juxtaposed to Western middle classes, then the academic idea of the death of class juxtaposed with the 'the governing classes, who shared abundantly in the capitalist bonanza', 'national "middle classes"', 'the business class', 'the financial class' and finally Warren Buffett's 'my class'. 'Globalizing capital continually produces differentiation and unevenness, and indeed antagonistic cleavages of many kinds', as Kalb notes, and it seems the emergence of these recognisable upper classes is counterpoised with weakening solidarities at the other end. How does one get to be in a class, and how come doesn't everyone get to be in one?

E. P. Thompson's classic, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1991 [1963]), displays in considerable detail both the conditions under which the English working class was born, and the merging of interests which it stood for. It is such large-scale merging of interests 'from below' that I feel Kalb struggles to grasp: the way in which the working class took part in its own making. In other words, what seems missing is not just the historical particularity of class societies, but the moralities associated with class: values shared at a scale that do make a difference in the world.

This brings me to my second objection.

Primitivist anthropology

In seeking someone to blame for the apparent absence of class in anthropological research, Kalb, I think, misrecognises the aims and motivations of those whom he labels 'primitivists': David Graeber and the *Hau* journal. Anthropological primitivism, Kalb writes,

assume[s] that people outside production and market exchange—that is in their kinship networks, neighbourhoods, communities, sodalities, so called 'free spaces'—are inclined to embrace non-capitalist values and even sustain a genuine 'everyday communism' and associated anti-capitalist reciprocity. This assumes that such private and common spaces are not infected by the social relationships and histories of capitalism, that they thrive in an ontological (indeed) separation from it. (Kalb, p. 53 in this issue)

This claim shows a lack of understanding of current research. Had Kalb not directly named Graeber and writers associated with the *Hau* journal, I would have assumed he was only building a strawman for his ('modernist'? 'refined?') branch of anthropology. But having singled out his primitivists, it appears to me Kalb has rather unfortunately misinterpreted their work. *Hau* has openly promoted *ethnographically grounded* accounts of the kinds of values, practices or constructions that may indeed stand in direct contrast to the market economy (or cultural interpretations of it), but as historically produced rejections of the values of capitalism rather than unfamiliarity with said values. To mistake such work for the impulse to seek primitive communism from beyond the capitalist order makes it very difficult for Kalb to see that the people whose work he rejects are his most worthwhile allies.

Kalb singles out Graeber's idealism in particular, portraying him as the primitivist utopian who assumes 'that it is from these capitalism-free spaces of everyday communism that a new morality and a new commons can emerge that is antithetic to and actively denounces the spirit of capitalism'. But it is not only the primitivist Graeber's utopianism we ought to hear, but the ethnographies he cites. What he and the other 'primitivists' are giving voice to is ultimately not that different from the moral economy and the fight for the 'old' commons that, according to E. P. Thompson, gave rise to the English working class as self-conscious, self-organised and meaningful social division. Certainly Thompson (1993 [1991]) went into considerable detail to show that the 18th and 19th-century struggles that gave birth to a self-conscious working class were not inconsequential simply

because they did not win precisely those battles they set out to win. What if what the ‘primitivists’ are describing were to be regarded as moral economies comparable to 19th-century England?

I appreciate the suggested return to a political economy approach in anthropology. But this should not be carried out in a way which simply favours the study of structural inequalities and programmatically refuses to recognise the value of studying other value systems or moralities that seek to challenge the dominant market ideologies. Specifically, such a move does not get us closer to a ‘non self-limiting’ anthropology.

To sum up, it seems that rather than approaching a ‘non-self limiting anthropology’, Kalb is needlessly limiting anthropology’s scope for engaging with what is, indeed, ‘the most jumbo laying out of capitalist social relations over the globe that humanity has yet experienced’. He is right in pointing out the usefulness of analytical concepts—which is to say theories—of class, labour and social reproduction, but wrong in assuming that this is a struggle for more stage time. For me, anthropology’s key strength lies in the breadth of its analysis, the ability to accommodate a number of perspectives, categories or orientations, and work out the way they interact, intertwine or become opposed.

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MATTI ERÄSAARI, PhD
 NEWTON INTERNATIONAL FELLOW
 SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
 UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER
 matti.erasaari@manchester.ac.uk